

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

**‘Culture is right, not luxury’:
Havana book fair**

—PAGE 6

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 73/NO. 8 MARCH 2, 2009

Guadeloupe mass strikes spread to Martinique

BY NAT LONDON

AND JEAN-LOUIS SALFATI

PARIS, February 16—Strikers in the French-dominated Caribbean island of Guadeloupe began constructing barricades after four weeks of a general strike, which has paralyzed the island since January 20. The strike spread February 5 to Martinique, a nearby island also ruled by France. Unions in a third French-dominated island, La Réunion in the Indian Ocean, have called for a one-day general strike starting March 5.

A union activist in the strikes was shot dead as he approached a barricade in the Guadeloupe capital Pointe-à-Pitre, reported Agence France-Presse.

The strikes have been called against the high cost of living on the islands. In Guadeloupe it has been led by a broad trade union-based coalition, the Lyannaj kont pwofitasyon (LKP), which in Creole means Stand Up Against Exploitation.

The central demand of the nearly 50

Continued on page 9

‘Stimulus’ bill deepens protectionist trade policy

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

A key component of the \$787 billion “stimulus” package, signed into law February 17 by President Barack Obama, is the protectionist measures it puts into effect. This and similar protectionist measures taken by governments across Europe are the result of sharpening competition among the imperialist powers for control over raw materials and markets.

The protectionist trend echoes that of past periods of capitalist crises. It was a major feature in the crises that ultimately resulted in the first and second world wars and is also used to weaken internationalist solidarity among workers.

The new law requires that “all of the iron, steel, and manufactured goods” used in projects funded by the “stimulus” package must be “produced in the United States.” Such a move has in the past led to trade wars.

The law also states that this policy will be applied unless doing so “would be inconsistent with the public interest.”

This phrase is aimed at reducing criti-

Continued on page 9

‘Workers must fight to defend class interests’

Socialist campaigns for L.A. mayor



Above: James Harris, Socialist Workers candidate for Los Angeles mayor, campaigning outside grocery store February 14. Inset: Harris speaks at December 20 protest against killing of Christian Portillo by Los Angeles County cop.

BY ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

LOS ANGELES—“Working people need to put our interests as a class first, and we need to fight,” said James Harris, the Socialist Workers candidate for mayor in a special election here.

Harris and his supporters talked with workers at a shopping center near his campaign office in the West Adams workers’ district. They gave out copies of his campaign brochure that includes

demands such as shortening the work-week with no cut in pay to spread the available work around, and that the federal government provide jobs, through a massive public works program at union-scale wages to build schools, hospitals, roads, and other infrastructure.

The California legislature held an all-night budget session this weekend but failed to reach agreement on a package

Continued on page 4

Ireland: factory occupation against layoffs remains firm

BY TONY HUNT

WATERFORD, Ireland—Workers remain firm here two weeks after occupying the Waterford Crystal glass plant in protest against their summary dismissal by accountants now running the company. A disciplined sit-in, including a shift system organized by the workers, was still in place February 14 at the visitors center—a tourist attraction displaying examples of the finely crafted products, from ornate chandeliers to drinking glasses, made by the workforce.

The plant was placed in receivership January 5. On January 30, acting on rumors that the plant was about to be shut and they would lose their jobs, workers occupied the visitor showroom. Later that day the accountants made an official announcement that production would be stopped immediately and 480 of some 700 workers laid off.

“The workers were so angry they weren’t going to be stopped by anybody,” said Tony Kelly a shop steward

Continued on page 3



Mark Anderson

February 4 demonstration by Waterford Crystal workers in Ireland against plant closing

S.F. union demands justice for Black victims of cops, courts

BY BETSEY STONE

SAN FRANCISCO—A February 14 rally hosted here by International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 called for justice for Oscar Grant, Troy Davis, and Mumia Abu-Jamal. More than 200 people attended the rally, which also celebrated Black History Month.

Grant, a 22-year-old Black worker, was shot to death by a Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) cop while being held face down on a train platform in nearby Oakland on New Year’s Day.

“We have to keep the protests going!” urged Jack Bryson, whose sons were with Grant when he was killed. Jackie and Nigel Bryson, along with Carlos Reyes, Fernando Anicete, and

Continued on page 2

Discussions on politics, crisis boost ‘Militant’ renewal drive

BY ANGEL LARISCY

“This is one of the best renewal drives. There are more discussions with people, more interest in discussing politics, and plenty to follow up on,” said Arlene Rubinstein, a sewing machine operator at American Apparel in Los Angeles. She reports two

Continued on page 4

Also Inside:

- | | |
|---|---|
| Forum at N.Y. campus debates Palestine struggle | 3 |
| Obama expands Bush’s ‘faith-based’ office | 5 |
| Swedish gov’t lifts ban on new nuclear plants | 6 |
| UK conference discusses impact of capitalist crisis | 7 |

Union demands justice

Continued from front page

Michael Greer, are suing BART for \$1.5 million in response to the brutal treatment meted out to them by the cops. Greer and Anicete were injured when police threw them to the ground. All were held handcuffed for five hours after they witnessed the killing of their friend.

Widespread outrage followed the release of videos of the shooting taken by passengers on the train. Johannes Mehserle, the cop who shot Grant in the back, was eventually arrested on charges of murder.

“They will try to cover up this case,” Bryson warned, pointing to the cops’ claims that the youth were “threatening” and “uncontrollable.” At the bail hearing on January 31, Mehserle’s lawyer termed the killing a “tragic accident,” saying that Mehserle meant to “tase” Grant, not shoot him with a gun. Mehserle is now out of jail on \$3 million bail.

Grant’s godmother, Diana Davis-Marks, also spoke, describing him as a serious young man who held a job as a butcher, having graduated from an apprentice program.

Banners across the front of the union

hall read, “An Injury To One Is An Injury to All” and “Free Troy Davis.”

A highlight of the rally was the talk by Martina Correia, the sister of Troy Davis, a Black man who is on death row on frame-up charges of killing a cop in Georgia in 1991.

She described how an international campaign has stayed the executioner’s hand three times when Davis was to be put to death. The case is now before a three-judge panel of the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Correia read part of a letter by her brother to supporters of his fight: “It is because of all of you I am alive today. . . . And no matter what happens in the days and weeks to come, this movement to end the death penalty, to seek true justice, to expose a system that fails to protect the innocent must be accelerated.”

Robert Bryan, the lead attorney for Mumia Abu-Jamal, spoke about the danger of execution that continues to hang over the Black rights activist’s head. Abu-Jamal has spent more than 25 years on death row after being framed up on charges of killing a Philadelphia cop in 1981.

Bryan called on Abu-Jamal’s supporters to continue to “make noise” against the racist frame-up. Richard Brown also spoke. He is one of the defendants in the case of the San Francisco Eight, former members and supporters of the Black Panther Party charged with conspiracy to murder a policeman in 1971. Pointing to the lack of evidence against the defendants, Brown called for the charges to be dropped.



Militant/Eric Simpson
Black History Month meeting at ILWU Local 10 hall February 14 in San Francisco. At podium is Martina Correia, sister of framed-up death row prisoner Troy Davis.

Socialist candidate speaks to Texas students



Militant/Steve Warshell

DENTON, Texas—Amanda Ulman, right, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Houston, speaks with North Texas University students at an Indian restaurant here February 7. “Obama’s ‘economic stimulus’ package has nothing to do with providing jobs,” said Ulman, a sewing machine operator. “The real source of the crisis is capitalism. Workers need to organize unions and then use our strength to take political power out of the hands of the billionaire rulers.”

A campaign table earlier that day on the main campus was the center of lively political discussion and sales of the *Militant* and Marxist books. Six subscriptions to the paper, including two renewals, were sold along with the *Communist Manifesto*, *New International* no. 14, *Teamster Rebellion*, and four copies of *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?*

—STEVE WARSELL

Rightists harass Florida Muslims

BY KARL BUTTS
AND MAGGIE TROWE

TAMPA, Florida—A group of more than 20 rightists, carrying large signs reading “Jesus Saves—Repent or Perish,” attempted to disrupt prayer services and provoke Muslims as they left a local mosque here January 21.

Other signs railed against homosexuals and adulterers. Yet another warned against “baby killing women,” a reference to abortion.

According to Ramzy Kilic, executive director of the Council on American and Islamic Relations here, the group stood outside the fence surrounding the mosque. One spoke through a bullhorn while the others formed a line holding placards and banners. They were clad in T-shirts, jackets, and hats emblazoned with slogans attacking Islam and urging

conversion to Christianity.

The rightists were all white, while the congregation was Arab and African American.

A video taken by opponents of the rightists records the group shouting over a bullhorn, “Let me tell you Mohammad was a liar, he was a pedophile, he was a murderer.” Another of them is heard taunting some worshipers, asking, “What about al-Arian?”

Sami al-Arian, a former computer science professor at the University of South Florida, was arrested in 2003 on frame-up conspiracy charges of supporting terrorism. Despite being found innocent by a federal jury in December 2005 al-Arian was returned to prison. He was finally released in early September 2008, but now faces contempt of court charges.

THE MILITANT

Why workers need to take power

The ‘Militant’ reports on the Socialist Workers Party candidates from Los Angeles to New York and their campaign platform that says workers need to take political power out of the hands of the capitalist class and build an alliance with small farmers.



Workers at Chicago job fair January 26

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Forum at N.Y. campus debates Palestine struggle

BY JANICE LYNN

NEW YORK—More than 70 people, mostly students, attended a panel discussion at Hunter College here February 10 on “The Truth About Gaza: What We Can Do to Free Palestine.” The General Union of Palestine Students, Campus Anti-War Network, Young Socialists (YS), International Socialist Organization (ISO), and Palestinian Club at Hunter sponsored the event.

Panelists were Lichi D’Amelio, from the ISO; Raja Abdulahq, a Palestinian student at City College and member of Al-Awda—The Palestine Right to Return Coalition; and Dan Fein, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New York City mayor. They kicked off what became not just a discussion, but a debate over the road forward for working people in Israel, Palestine, and the United States.

In between the opening presentations, video clips of the damage caused by the Israeli assault on Gaza were shown, including an interview with a former Israel Defense Forces (IDF) pilot who opposed that assault.

D’Amelio said Israel’s assault on Gaza “was not just about rooting out the leadership of Hamas elected by a landslide in 2006 in democratic elections, but about destroying infrastructure and punishing the Palestinians for voting in Hamas.” Despite the misgivings many on the “left” have about Hamas, she said, it is the representative of the Palestinians in Gaza because it has not made concessions to Israel.

“Our task here in the U.S. is the same as for working people in the Middle East and throughout the world,” said SWP candidate Fein. In the midst of the deepening worldwide economic and financial crisis, “only working-class revolution to take political power out of the hands of the billionaire ruling families offers a way out.”

Fein denounced the Israeli government’s blockade of Gaza and the Egyptian government’s complicity. He demanded the opening of all Gaza borders, granting freedom to travel, and massive aid to the Palestinians there.

The biggest challenge facing the Palestinians, he explained, is forging a revolutionary leadership. Fein said that Hamas and Fatah are obstacles to the Palestinian struggle for land, water rights, labor unions, women’s

rights, and for freeing political prisoners.

“Neither Hamas, nor Fatah, nor the Palestinian Authority offer a road to liberation. The Israeli capitalist state will be overthrown by Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, and inside Israel, along with Israeli workers, fighting together for a democratic, secular Palestine,” he said.

Fein noted that the Palestine Liberation Organization put forward the perspective for a democratic, secular Palestine for Jews, Muslims, Christians, and non-believers in 1970 but no longer does so.

The socialist candidate also pointed out that anti-Semitism—Jew-hatred—is an obstacle to building a working-class movement and must be opposed.

“The capitalist class uses Jew-hatred to divert us from targeting capitalism as the problem that must be eliminated,” Fein said.

Abdulahq said that Palestinians in the Gaza Strip “live in a prison” and were resisting Israeli “ethnic cleansing.”

During the discussion period many students and others exchanged opinions and at times sharply debated the issues. Tom Baumann of the YS said it was important to differentiate between the Israeli government and the Israeli people and pointed to the importance of fighting for a democratic, secular Palestine where everyone would have equal rights. “The best way we can help the Palestinian struggle is to work to make a revolution in this country,” he said.

Hannah Fleury of the ISO said that the Israeli state is similar to the apartheid regime that existed in South Africa before its overturn. She called for a boycott of Sabra hummus, saying



Militant/Maura DeLuca

“Truth About Gaza” panel at Hunter College in New York City debated road forward for working people in Israel, Palestine, and the region, as well as the United States. From left to right: cochairs Moayad Toom, president of Palestinian Club, and Amanda Ginsberg, Campus Anti-War Network; Lichi D’Amelio, International Socialist Organization; Raja Abdulahq, Al-Awda—Palestine Right to Return Coalition; and Dan Fein, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New York mayor.

that the Israeli-owned company gives money to the IDF.

ISO spokesperson D’Amelio, in her closing remarks, more openly stated her support for the political positions of Hamas.

“I have read the speeches of Khaled Meshal [the head of the Hamas Political Bureau in Damascus],” D’Amelio said. “There is little in what he says that I disagree with.”

D’Amelio said that while some Israeli Jews could break with the Israeli state, “let’s be clear. Many homes of Palestinians are still standing inside Israel and there are Jews living in them. The right of return means that Jews in those houses must leave.”

While there needs to be a revolution in the United States, that is not posed today, she said. The most important thing to do in the United States today is to build a movement against what she called Israeli apartheid, including campaigning to get universities to divest in companies with ties to Israel.

Responding to one participant who had pointed to the lessons of the Cu-

ban Revolution and its importance today for the struggle in Palestine, Abdulahq said, “Unlike in Cuba there is no Palestinian bourgeoisie. All Palestinians are working class.”

“There are no Israeli workers in Israel,” he added, arguing that Palestinians do all the work in Israel, along with immigrants from Africa and Russia.

Abdulahq said he is for a “unitary state” run by Palestinians.

“We should begin with the workers and peasants and what’s in their interests,” said Fein, just before Abdulahq and D’Amelio gave their closing remarks. “Hamas is a bourgeois party, based on charity and demagoguery. The challenge is to build a movement to overthrow capitalism. This is a world perspective, a class perspective. This is what is needed in Palestine.”

The video of the Israeli pilot who opposed the assault on Gaza, Fein said, shows that it is possible and necessary to win Jewish workers in Israel to a common struggle with Palestinian workers.

Glass factory occupation in Ireland against layoffs

Continued from front page

for the Unite union, which represents 90 percent of the workers in the plant. Kelly said workers, after a brief tussle with security guards, took over the plant’s visitors center. “We got text messages saying we were sitting in . . . so we came down, the word went round,” said Liz Sullivan, a packer at the plant for 25 years.

Some workers heard they had lost their jobs over the radio. “It was spontaneous. People thought the best place to be was at the factory not sitting at home,” said Jimmy Kelly, Irish regional secretary for the UK-based Unite.

The plant is a subsidiary of Waterford Wedgwood, which also has a porcelain factory in the United Kingdom and manufacturing sites in other countries. Under the terms of receivership—a form of bankruptcy aimed at protecting capitalists’ interests—the company’s operations in Ireland were taken over by accountants with the Deloitte Ireland firm.

So far police or security guards have made no efforts to retake the facility, Tony Kelly said. Signs such as “United we stand divided we fall” and “Workers united will never be defeated” were chalked on menu blackboards in the center’s cafeteria, where occupying workers gathered and relaxed, and

were displayed on banners outside.

A solidarity rally of 2,000 took place at the factory the day after the occupation started, and some 6,000 protested in Waterford, a city of 50,000, February 4 in solidarity with the action. Current and former workers and those from other factories joined the march, organized by the Waterford Council of Trade Unions, which went through the town culminating in a rally at the factory, reported the *Irish Times*.

At a general meeting February 12, some 600 union members voted to continue the occupation and to support union officials pursuing a possible buyout deal by KPS Capital, one of two U.S. firms considering buying the company. The actual extent of job cuts, compensation packages, and pension payments for the workers under any deal, however, remains unclear.

“There will be more twists and turns in this,” Tony Kelly said. One element of the KPS buyout proposal that has been reported is a one-time payment of 10 million euros to be divided up among workers who lose their jobs. The *Irish Times* said this could amount to as little as 12,000 euros for each worker (1 euro=US\$1.26).

“We’ll keep fighting as long as we can for what we are entitled to. The carrots they’ve offered so far aren’t big

enough,” one occupying worker who asked that his name not be used told the *Militant*. “At the moment our dignity is all we have left,” explained another worker. Both are experienced glass cutters who like many at the plant have worked for close to 40 years or more for the company and have seen commitments agreed to by the employer vanish into thin air.

Eugene Wall explained that he stood to lose five years of a deferred pension scheme worth some 10,000 euros a year. Many had signed up for an early retirement agreement, which has now been ripped up by the bosses. Meanwhile, according to an *Irish Times* report in January, the company pension fund has an 111 million euro deficit, with workers likely to lose everything they had paid in. There is no state-funded pension protection scheme safety net.

Messages of solidarity and donations for the workers at Waterford Crystal can be sent to: Walter Cullen, Unite Hall, Keyzer Street, Waterford, Co. Waterford, Ireland. The union can also be reach by phone at +353 5187 5438; fax: +353 5187 8401; and email: walter.cullen@unitetheunion.com

Caroline Bellamy and Alex Xezonakis contributed to this article.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

FLORIDA

Miami

Stop the Attacks on the Liberty City Seven! Speaker: Ellen Brickley, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Feb. 27. Dinner, 7 p.m.; program, 8 p.m. 6777 NW 7th Ave. #5. Tel.: (305) 757-8869.

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland

Celebrate the Publication of ‘Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa.’ Speaker: Felicity Coggan, Communist League. Fri., Feb. 27, 7 p.m. 7 Mason Ave. Otahuhu (upstairs, above Laundromat) Tel.: (09) 276-8885.

L.A. socialist candidate

Continued from front page of cuts that include \$8 billion in public schools and community colleges and \$890 million in cuts for state colleges and universities. Tuition rates have been steadily increasing for years.

Cost-of-living increases for welfare recipients will be eliminated and maximum payments for a family of three would be less than what a similar sized family received in 1989. More than \$830 million will be cut for early childhood and mental-health programs.

In addition to \$459 million in transit cuts, car registration fees will almost double, parking meters have already quadrupled in some cases, and a new 12-cents-per-gallon tax on gasoline will be levied. Sales tax in Los Angeles County will soar to 9.75 percent.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said he intends to lay off 10,000 state workers.

Schwarzenegger has already ordered that more than 238,000 state workers take two unpaid days off per month. On February 6, some state offices were closed on Friday for the first time. Officials of the Service Employees International Union Local 1000 reached a tentative agreement with Schwarzenegger to reduce the furloughs to one day a month for about 95,000 of its members. This agreement has not been ratified by the union membership.

“Capitalist politicians try to convince us there is some fixed pool of money

called the state budget and that when this budget runs into the red, they must cut. They try to convince us to think about the state budget like it’s your household budget. But balancing the budget—whether the state or city budget—is simply a set of code words for making working people bear the weight of the economic crisis. There is no equality of sacrifice under capitalism.

“You don’t sell bonds for example to finance your household,” explained Harris. “One of the things my campaign is explaining is how state bonds, which are one of the favorite investments of the very rich, are cash cows used to expand the wealth of the ruling rich at the expense of working people.

“According to Article 13B, Section 7 of the California State Constitution, the bondholders must be paid on time, in full, and forever, not just their original capital investment, but also the interest—interest that makes the original investment be repaid many times over.

“Let me give you an example. In 2008, Proposition 1A, a bond for building high-speed train service, was adopted. In the voter’s handbook it stated the cost of the bond is \$19.4 billion—\$9.95 billion for the principal and \$9.5 billion for interest payments. That’s almost \$2 for every \$1 invested. The debt-service or interest on this one bond is more than the \$8.89 billion in education cuts that are being



Militant/Naomi Craine James Harris, right, Socialist Workers candidate for Los Angeles mayor, campaigns February 17.

proposed in the California budget.”

As the discussion turned to unemployment, several more workers stopped to listen and participate.

“No, I’m not affected by the economic crisis,” Kay Livingston told Harris with a smile. “I just work three part-time jobs and there’s cutbacks on all of them.”

“I think the Republicans really hate this country,” Livingston said as the discussion continued.

“The problem,” responded Harris, “is both capitalist parties—the Democrats and the Republicans. President Barack Obama, for example, said that the pur-

pose of his stimulus plan is to save or create up to 3.5 million jobs. But what he is really doing is propping up the same capitalist system that is responsible for the crisis.

“But stimulating the corporations, banks, and capitalist financial institutions doesn’t mean jobs for workers. When President Obama took his sales pitch to Peoria, Illinois, the home of Caterpillar tractor, Obama told the press that the Caterpillar CEO James Owens told him he’d rehire some of the 22,000 workers that are laid off from that company if the stimulus plan passed. But Owens held his own press conference and said that wasn’t realistic. He said that, even if he got the stimulus, more layoffs are ahead.”

“It took me two months to get my first check,” said Laurie Pemberton. “If you need someone to talk on this, I’m a good speaker.”

Pemberton’s experience is all too familiar to the unemployed in California.

Vernal Coleman, a Teamster with 16 years and nine months at his job, also reported he hadn’t received a penny after being unemployed for more than a month. “I’m facing foreclosure on my house, but I received a letter because they say I didn’t put the date on my claim. They have my phone number, call me up.”

‘Militant’ steps up pace of renewal campaign

Continued from front page of her coworkers decided to renew their subscriptions to the *Militant*.

With one week to go, *Militant* supporters around the world are stepping up efforts to bring home the January

24 through February 24 campaign to win 400 readers of the socialist news-weekly to renewing their subscriptions or subscribing for six months or longer.

Through the campaign, supporters of the *Militant* are getting to know readers of the paper better by visiting them to discuss politics and also showing them a range of revolutionary books and pamphlets.

Rubenstein reports that Eleanor García, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress in the 32nd District in Los Angeles, spent over an hour at the home of a trucker who in the course of the discussion renewed his subscription for six months. He also purchased *The First and Second Declarations of Havana* and *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?*

Supporters of the *Militant* in Seattle sent in three renewals this week from meetings with readers. One was from a man who “especially liked the coverage of the economy from a working-class point of view,” writes Edwin Fruit.

Des Moines, Iowa, supporters, who have signed up 13 readers to continue receiving the paper, are raising their quota from 15 to 18. They went to Waterloo, Iowa, with distributors from the Twin Cities, and met with four readers who decided to renew.

“One renewal was to a woman who considers the *Militant* her paper,” writes Becca Williamson. “She mostly liked the coverage on

immigrant rights and labor issues.”

Janet Roth of Auckland, New Zealand, reports they have sold 10 renewals toward their quota of 12. “Our sales in Auckland have been boosted by responding to oppose the Sri Lankan government’s military offensive against the Tamil minority,” Roth writes.

One week, 142 subs to go! Join the campaign by renewing your subscription or signing up a new reader today. Contact a distributor listed on page 8 to find out about activities in your area or to ask someone to visit for more discussion.

‘Blood money’ contributions boost long-term communist publishing program

“We finally got that ‘stimulus check’/blood money,” wrote Gale Shangold and Craig Honts. The \$1,200 in blood money was from the bribes handed out by the Bush administration last year.

“Blood money” is bribes aimed at getting workers to shut up and not fight for higher wages, safe working conditions, and for full medical coverage for all workers. Working-class fighters refused to take these bribes and instead turn them against the bosses and their system of exploitation.

Members of the communist movement have a proud tradition of contributing blood money to the Capital Fund. These contributions advance the long-term publishing program to produce the political weapons workers need to fight to take political power out the hands of the billionaire families and begin organizing society to end the wages system.

After waiting a few months and no check arrived, Shangold, an office worker, and Honts, a railroad engineer, decided to inquire about what had happened. “They seemed to be using every technicality to not send the check,” Shangold said. They were told at one point that “it’s in the mail.” Nearly nine months later it finally came.

John Staggs and George Chalmers sent \$209 from a Christmas bonus from the bosses at the JBS Packerland slaughterhouse near Philadelphia. “They also gave us a ham, which we donated to the Militant Labor Forum dinner,” they wrote. They were referring to dinner discussions at Militant Labor Forum halls where participants get together for a meal and conversation before the main forum presentation.

Jacquie Henderson, a sewing-machine operator, sent a \$25 New Year’s bribe she received from bosses at the plant where she made wedding dresses.

— BY SAM MANUEL

2009 ‘Militant’ Subscription Renewal Drive January 24 – February 24			
Country	Quota	Sold	%
UNITED STATES			
Los Angeles	20	17	85%
Seattle	12	10	83%
Chicago	20	16	80%
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Houston	15	11	73%
Philadelphia	15	11	73%
Des Moines, IA*	18	13	72%
New York	45	31	69%
Twin Cities, MN	30	20	67%
Miami	25	15	60%
San Francisco	25	13	52%
Boston	10	4	40%
Atlanta	40	13	33%
U.S. Total	320	209	65%
AUSTRALIA	25	13	52%
UNITED KINGDOM			
Edinburgh	7	4	57%
London	15	8	53%
UK Total	22	12	55%
CANADA	15	11	73%
NEW ZEALAND	12	10	83%
SWEDEN	8	3	38%
Int’l Totals	402	258	64%
Should Be	400	300	75%
* Raised quota			

ON THE PICKET LINE

Montreal newspaper workers reject massive concessions

MONTREAL—Rejecting demands by Quebecor Media for massive concessions, strikers picketing the *Journal de Montréal* here in east-end Montreal are getting a good response from workers, who honk their horns in solidarity as they drive by.

The picket line has been up since January 24, when 253 office and editorial workers were locked out by the newspaper bosses. The *Journal de Montréal* is the most widely read French-language paper in Montreal. It has never had a strike or a lockout.

The workers are members of the *Journal's* newspaper workers' union, which is affiliated to the CSN, a major Quebec labor federation. Their contract expired on Dec. 31, 2008. Two days after the lockout the workers voted to reject the company's final offer and by 99 percent decided to go on strike.

The union states that Quebecor Media bosses have made 230 demands, including eliminating almost 75 jobs, lengthening the workweek by 25 percent without compensation, cutting salaries of some workers, and reducing benefits by 20 percent.

According to the union, last year the newspaper made \$50 million in profits on revenue of \$200 million. The strikers report the paper is continuing to publish using management scabs. In 14 years Quebecor Media has initiated 13 lockouts at its media enterprises, the last one for 16 months at the *Journal de Québec*.

The workers have started their own online newspaper, www.ruefrontenac.com. Other unionists have joined the picket lines. Strikers told the *Militant* these included Petro-Canada workers who recently pushed back a concessions drive by their bosses after a lockout of more than a year.

—John Steele



Militant/John Steele

Locked-out workers picket *Journal de Montréal* February 6 over job, benefit, and pay cuts.

Service workers strike for pay raise at Berlin airports

Two-hour strikes by service workers in Berlin's two international airports forced flight delays and cancellations February 12. Workers in the

Verdi union carried out the stoppages to demand an 8 percent pay raise.

The Berlin Airports Web site reported at least 10 flights at Tegel and Schoenefeld airports were canceled and at least 10 more delayed. About 250 workers are taking part in the stoppages, reported Bloomberg news agency.

Verdi is organizing brief work stoppages across Germany this month, calling for 8 percent pay increases for more than 700,000 public sector workers.

—Sam Manuel

Obama expands Bush's 'faith-based' office

BY CINDY JAQUITH

President Barack Obama signed an executive order February 5 inaugurating a White House Office on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, an expansion of a similar program under George W. Bush. The office will have "abortion reduction" as a major priority, reported the *Washington Post*.

A *Financial Times* report February 6 on the news conference where Obama announced the new office said its priorities are fighting poverty, "reducing teenage pregnancies and abortion," and "encouraging 'responsible fatherhood.'" The newspaper added, "The aims reflect Mr Obama's call in his inaugural address for a 'new era of responsibility' and represent a peace offering to social conservatives who opposed his election."

Bush set up his "faith-based" office in 2001 to funnel government money to church groups and nonprofit organizations to provide social services. It was part of continuing the Clinton administration's drive against Social Security and the idea that the government, not charity or the individual family, should be responsible for the social needs of working people.

The Bush administration dismissed charges that his initiative violated separation of church and state and provided government money to religious groups that discriminate in hiring. When Congress wouldn't exempt church organizations from antidiscrimination legislation, Bush issued an executive order essentially waiving the hiring laws for these church groups.

In a campaign speech last July, Obama criticized the Bush initiative, saying, "If you get a federal grant, you can't use that grant money to proselytize to the people you help, and you can't discriminate against them—or against the people you hire—on the basis of their religion."

But when he announced his own "faith-based" office, Obama left the Bush exemption of church groups from antidiscrimination laws in place. Obama said the discrimination issue could be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

During one of his debates with John McCain during the 2008 presidential campaign, Obama had explained that he supports legal abortion but it's "a moral issue and one that I think good

people on both sides can disagree on. There surely is some common ground when both those who believe in choice and those who are opposed to abortion can come together and say, 'We should try to prevent unintended pregnancies.'" He also called in his election campaign for the Democratic Party platform to be rewritten to add a call for reducing "the need for abortions."

In announcing the new faith-based office, Obama appealed directly to religion, saying that "the change that Americans are looking for will not come from government alone. . . . There is a force for good greater than government."

He spoke along similar lines at a National Prayer Breakfast earlier that day, where he gave a speech that began with how such breakfasts originated during the Great Depression. "The leaders of the community did all that they could for those who were suffering in their midst," Obama said. "And then they decided to do something more: they prayed."

In the debate over the economic stimulus bill adopted by the House

of Representatives, Obama personally intervened with Democrats to get them to delete an item that would have made it easier for states to provide Medicaid funding for contraception, according to the Associated Press. The news agency reported that Obama's move came "at a time the administration is courting Republican critics of the legislation."

Several prominent conservative church leaders have welcomed the Obama presidency in light of these recent moves. Joel Hunter, pastor of the Northland Church near Orlando, Florida, said, "I'm pro-life. I hate abortion. But this administration is trying to be very sensitive." Frank Page, an appointee to Obama's faith-based advisory council and past president of the Southern Baptist Convention, reacted to Obama's failure to revoke the Bush policy on discrimination in hiring. "I'm very excited about this," said Page. "I know he was struggling with this particular issue. But this will allow religious groups to be true to themselves."

—Sam Manuel

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



March 2, 1984

The U.S. ruling class discussed launching a nuclear attack against Vietnam in 1954 as part of a larger plan for U.S. military intervention there. This fact has been known for a while.

But new details about this were reported in the February 14 *New York Times* in an article by Drew Middleton.

Two separate U.S. Army plans in early 1954 advocated the use of nuclear bombs at Dienbienphu. One proposed dropping anywhere from one to six 31-kiloton bombs from carrier-based U.S. aircraft. Each bomb was three times as powerful as that used on Hiroshima by the U.S. ruling class in World War II.

These were not "contingency plans," based on some hypothetical scenario. They were *actively considered* for implementation.



March 2, 1959

NEW YORK—Marx and Engels' observation on the function of capitalist government—that it serves as "a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie"—is regarded by many today as disproved. But Mayor Wagner's Democratic administration seems hell-bent on showing how right Marx and Engels were in the Communist Manifesto.

Right now the administration is busy trying to slap new taxes on the working people, keep the public schools segregated, break a teachers' strike and help renting-gouging slum landlords.

Despite this hectic schedule, it's also working on a deal to donate an estimated quarter of a billion dollars of public property and tax-payers' money to Consolidated Edison, the city's monopolistic public utilities corporation.



February 24, 1934

Like a good many other industries, the hotel industry expanded and overexpanded during the boom period of the 1920s. The effects of this investment orgy were obvious even as early as 1928, at the very height of the prosperity flush. In the eight year period from 1920 to 1928 the number of available rooms had increased 50 percent whereas the rooms actually occupied increased less than 13 percent and the number of guests by about the same percentage.

Wages in 1929 were as low as \$844 annually for dining room, lunch room and kitchen employees in the whole country and \$988 for New York workers. Since the above figures were gathered wages have fallen twenty-five percent and more. Nor has the NRA [National Recovery Act] helped any. Quite the contrary. Wages of waiters and waitresses which were \$20 before had fallen to \$15 in August 1933.

‘Culture is a right, not a luxury’: Havana book fair

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN
AND BEN JOYCE

HAVANA—Tens of thousands of Cubans pour daily into the former Spanish colonial fortress San Carlos de la Cabaña, where the 18th Havana International Book Fair is taking place.

Speaking at the February 12 opening ceremony, Minister of Culture Abel Prieto noted that since it began 25 years ago the annual book fair has become the country’s major cultural event. The revolutionary government and Communist Party of Cuba, he said, were determined that the book fair be held despite the \$10 billion in damages caused by three major hurricanes in the second half of last year.

“Culture is a right, not a luxury,” Prieto said, quoting Fernando Ortiz, one of Cuba’s foremost 20th century writers on the country’s culture and national identity.

From the beginning, Prieto remarked, Cuba’s revolutionary leadership has made a priority of widening access to culture and education for the broad masses of the Cuban people. He noted that within months of the January 1959 revolutionary victory, two major cultural institutions were founded, Casa de las Américas and the national film institute ICAIC.

In 1961, the revolutionary government established art schools that opened their doors to youth from working-class and rural families, and 100,000 volunteer teachers went into the countryside, virtually wiping out illiteracy within a year.

Prieto noted that the founding president of Casa de las Américas

was Haydée Santamaría, a heroine of the 1953 assault on the Moncada barracks, which opened the revolutionary struggle led by the July 26 Movement and Rebel Army under the leadership of Fidel Castro. Casa de las Américas publishes a literary magazine by the same name and sponsors a prestigious literary contest for writers from across Latin America and the Caribbean.

This year’s book fair is dedicated to celebrating Casa’s 50th anniversary. The institution’s current president, well-known essayist Roberto Fernández Retamar, also addressed the opening ceremony.

Prieto recalled that even in the worst years of the 1990s, when Cuba experienced a deep economic and social crisis after the abrupt end of favorable trade relations and aid from the Soviet Union, the revolutionary leadership was determined that resources for promoting literature, music, and art be maintained.

He said the same approach is being taken today in face of the hurricane damage. This year, more than 1,000 new books were scheduled to be published in time to go on sale in 46 shops across Havana two weeks prior to the opening of the fair.

After 10 days in Havana, the book fair will travel to 16 other cities across the island, culminating in Santiago de Cuba in the east. The number of cities has been scaled back from previous years due to the post-hurricane rebuilding priorities. A “mountain book festival,” however, will be held in March, bringing new titles to the more remote areas of the Escambray mountains in central Cuba. Nationwide, some 6 million books will be



Militant/Ben Joyce

Tens of thousands of Cubans have been attending Havana International Book Fair held at former Spanish colonial fortress San Carlos de la Cabaña.

available for purchase through the fair.

Here in Havana, the literary fair includes poetry readings, a forum on the world economic crisis, book awards, and hundreds of book presentations. Art shows, concerts, and ballet performances are being staged in conjunction with the festival. Dozens of publishers from Cuba and other countries have booths at the book fair. As in previous years, one of them is Pathfinder Press.

In attendance at the opening ceremony were Cuban president Raúl Castro and the president of Chile, Michelle Bachelet. Chile is the country of honor at this year’s event. The fair is also dedicated to two prominent Cuban writers, poet Fina García Marruz, winner of the 1990 national literature prize, and historian Jorge Ibarra Cuesta, who was awarded the national social science prize in 1996.

Ibarra, who is known for his writings on Cuban history of the 19th and 20th

centuries, addressed the inauguration.

As a youth Ibarra was a founding member of the March 13 Revolutionary Directorate, one of the organizations that took part in the revolutionary struggle against the Batista dictatorship and later came together to form the Communist Party of Cuba.

During the 1950s, as president of the Federation of University Students in Santiago de Cuba, he was expelled from the University of Oriente for his political activity. As a member of the revolutionary underground, he also took part in political activities in Mexico and the United States.

Interviewed by the weekly newspaper *Trabajadores*, Ibarra, 78, said his work as a historian “cannot be separated from my participation in the revolutionary process.” He always “sought out what was hidden or ignored by bourgeois historians, in order to uncover the tendencies toward revolutionary change that were present at given conjunctures but were silenced by the official historiography.” He added that “Marx once wrote, ‘Only the truth is revolutionary.’”

Swedish gov’t lifts ban on new nuclear plants

BY ANITA ÖSTLING

STOCKHOLM, Sweden—In a major political shift the Swedish government has reached an agreement opening the way for construction of new nuclear reactors here after a nearly 30-year ban.

There are 10 nuclear reactors in use in Sweden at three different plants. They produce close to one-third of the country’s energy, with the remaining energy coming from oil, biofuels, and hydroelectric power. The oldest reactor was built in 1972 and the newest in 1985. The new reactors are to be built on the sites of the old ones with no increase in the number in operation.

Maud Olofsson, leader of the Center Party, called it “a historic agreement” and her most important decision as minister of industry. She said it is “for the sake of my children and grandchildren.”

Shortly after the 1979 near-meltdown of the Three Mile Island reactor in Pennsylvania, a referendum was passed in Sweden banning construction of new nuclear power stations, with a deadline of closing existing ones by 2010. An agreement between the Social Democrats, Left Party, and Center Party in 2004 did away with the 2010 deadline. But the ban against

building new reactors remained in place.

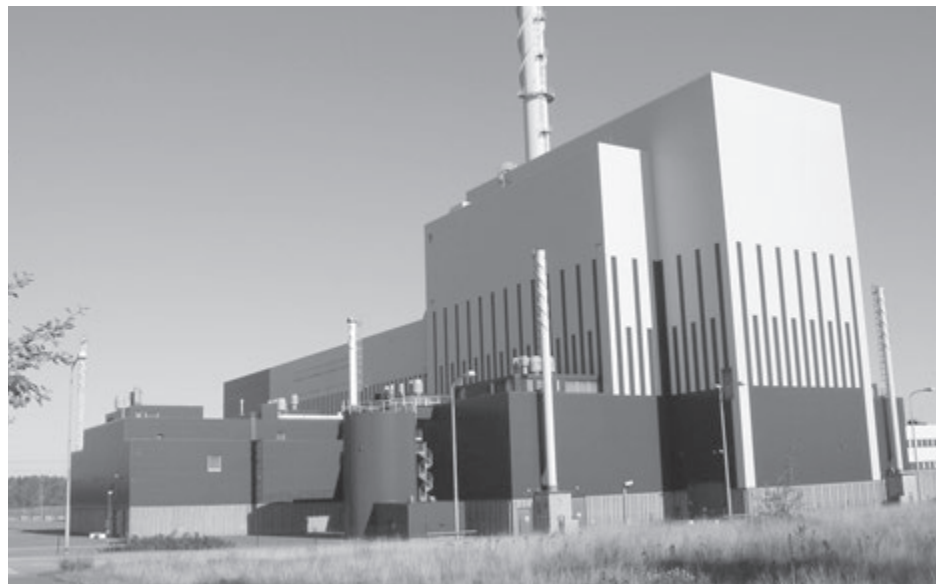
In the 1980 referendum there were three ballot initiatives. They differed mainly on how fast to close the existing reactors and were supported in various combinations by the Conservatives, Liberals, Social Democrats, Center Party, Christian Democrats, and Left Party. None of these parties advocated expansion of nuclear energy. The Center Party was the leading force in demanding immediate closure.

Leading employer representatives in Sweden welcomed the new agree-

ment to resume building reactors. Urban Bäckström, managing director of the umbrella organization Swedish Enterprises, said that Olofsson has shown “political courage.” He said, “The political game playing with the energy issue needs to end and in this the Social Democratic Party and the trade union movement has a major responsibility. . . . To say no to this agreement is to say no to safe jobs in the future.”

Olofsson has invited the opposition parties to talks. This was welcomed

Continued on page 7



Mattias Olsson

Nuclear power plant in Oskarshamn, one of three nuclear plants in Sweden.

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‘Working people need to see our self-worth’

UK conference discusses impact of capitalist crisis, transformation of working class

BY ÖGMUNDUR JÓNSSON

LONDON—“For people in this room, born and bred in the UK, we are, for the first time, living through years when building toward proletarian revolution is a question of practical politics,” said Jonathan Silberman, the main speaker at a January 31 meeting here entitled “World Capitalist Crisis Has Barely Begun! . . . and Workers’ Fight to End the Wages System Is Posed.”

Speaking on behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist League (CL) in the United Kingdom, Silberman explained, “Proletarian revolution is about the political conditions and struggles that lead toward the revolutionary transformation of the proletariat. . . . Today the biggest obstacle working people have is not recognizing our own self-worth—understanding that we’re capable of taking political power and organizing society anew.”

Fifty-five people attended the meeting, sponsored by the CL and the Young Socialists. It was the centerpiece of a weekend of political activity drawing participants from London, Edinburgh, and elsewhere in the United Kingdom, as well as from Belgium, Canada, France, Greece, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the United States.

The following day, young socialists and contacts of the communist movement here met to continue the political discussion.

Organized supporters of the communist movement also reviewed their recent accomplishments in helping step up production of Pathfinder books as part of their work in the Printing Project. These supporters also discussed their work to place Pathfinder books in shops and libraries and to help finance the communist movement.

In the afternoon, communist workers attended two workshops to enhance the skills they need to hold jobs in the meat and garment industries and be part of developing working-class resistance.

Communist response to crisis

“Communist propaganda is extremely important today. We can be more bold in presenting a revolutionary perspective than has been open to



Militant/Caroline Bellamy

Panel at London conference discussed “World Capitalist Crisis Has Barely Begun! . . . and Workers’ Fight to End the Wages System Is Posed.” From left to right: Andrés Mendoza, Young Socialists; Norton Sandler, Socialist Workers Party in the United States; Jonathan Silberman, Communist League in the United Kingdom.

us for decades,” said Norton Sandler, a member of the Socialist Workers Party National Committee in the United States, at the meeting.

Commenting on the inauguration of Barack Obama as U.S. president, Sandler said, “There will be no equality of sacrifice,” as Obama claimed in his inauguration speech. “Those who are today bearing the brunt of the crisis in the U.S. will continue to do so, except our conditions will worsen,” he said.

The rulers will eventually attempt to resolve this crisis the way they always have in the imperialist epoch,” Sandler said, “through massive military spending.”

The meeting celebrated the publication of two new Pathfinder titles: an expanded edition of *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* by Mary-Alice Waters and *Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa: Reports from Equatorial Guinea* by Waters and Martin Koppel. It was also a send-off for volunteers in the Pathfinder team at the Havana International Book Fair February 12–22. One of those is Andrés Mendoza, a meat worker and member of the Young Socialists in London.

Mendoza reported that Pathfinder would be presenting a broad range of

titles, both at the book fair and other events, working with Cuban trade unionists, academics, and youth leaders.

Oppose reactionary strikes

“Communist workers oppose the reactionary, anti-foreign worker strikes and protests that have been taking place in the UK in recent days,” Silberman said. He was referring to actions calling for “British Jobs for British Workers” which began January 28 at the Total oil refinery in Lindsey, Lincolnshire, in northern England.

Even as the “union bureaucracy is doing its best to dampen mass resistance,” Silberman said, “struggles will break out.” The more than 200 workers occupying Waterford Crystal’s factory in Ireland after 480 job cuts were announced “is a glimpse of the future in the present,” he said.

“The working class here—as it

is throughout the world—is being strengthened by mass immigration,” Silberman stressed. Given the international character of both the working class and the capitalist crisis, Silberman pointed out, there is a “convergence of experience which lays the foundation for proletarian internationalism practiced by millions. Isn’t it easier after the collapse in Iceland for workers in the Philippines and Thailand—where many of the immigrant workers in Iceland come from—to see workers there as their brothers?”

Democratic, secular Palestine

The CL leader explained how the perspective of struggle for a democratic and secular Palestine, uniting workers and other toilers, both Jewish and Arab, in a common revolutionary struggle—within Israel as well as the Palestinian territories and across the region—is more decisive and gains more of a hearing today.

“Class-conscious workers should drop the term Zionism,” in the current context, Sandler added. “There is no Zionist movement today. The reality is, it has become an epithet, not a scientific description; a synonym for ‘Jew’ that helps fuel Jew-hatred, which will rise as the capitalist crisis deepens.”

The meeting was held in a bright attractive hall, a short walk from the Communist League and Young Socialists headquarters in London. Participants enjoyed a fine catered dinner where the political discussion was continued in a relaxed atmosphere.

A fund appeal netted a total of £1,160 (\$1,680) in donations and pledges, which will be added to some £4,000 (\$5,800) already raised for a Party Building Fund. This fund will help the CL respond to political openings and developments in the world.

Nuclear power in Sweden

Continued from page 6

by Mona Sahlin, of the Social Democrats, the leading force in the newly formed electoral bloc with the Green and Left parties. “We will go together to the talks and have mutual questions and answers,” Sahlin said. All three parties oppose building new reactors.

Tomas Eneroth, spokesperson for the Social Democrats on energy issues, wrote an opinion piece in *Svenska Dagbladet* February 7 titled “A broad agreement is needed.” After welcoming the invitation to talks he outlined his party’s position: “The international experiences of construction of new nuclear power stations in the UK and Finland should warn us. Costs have skyrocketed and become much more expensive than wind energy. Renewable energy prices are on the contrary going down. . . . This is the future for Sweden’s energy production, not nuclear power. . . . We are also in agreement that we need a surplus of energy. The most important thing is to guarantee a safe and secure energy production for our industries.”

Nuclear energy production in Sweden has produced an average of 180

tons of nuclear waste a year since 1985. The waste is being stored. No decision has yet been made on its final disposal.

The decision by the Swedish government was featured in Germany, where the Social Democrats and the Greens passed a law in 2002 that all German nuclear energy is to be phased out by 2022. The Christian Democrats and Liberals in Germany have pledged to repeal the law if they win the elections in September. Belgium’s government has decided to phase out nuclear energy, but with a series of provisions. Reactors closed in Italy after the Chernobyl disaster of 1986, but the government now says it wants to reopen them.

Today 438 reactors are in use in 30 countries, supplying 5.9 percent of the world’s energy. The United States has most of them, with 104, followed by France’s 59 and Japan’s 55. There are 44 new reactors under construction, mostly in Asia. In addition China, Japan, India, Pakistan, and Iran are building reactors, as are Russia, France, Finland, Turkey, and Argentina.

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Europe and America

Two speeches on imperialism

by Leon Trotsky

In the mid-1920s, Bolshevik leader Trotsky explained the emergence of the U.S. as imperialism’s dominant economic and financial power following World War I. He described the sharpening conflicts between Washington and its European rivals and highlighted the revolutionary openings for the working class that would be played out in the decade to come. —\$6



Our Politics Start With the World

In New International no. 13 by Jack Barnes

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Cuba’s fight against Escambray ‘bandits’ in 1960s

Below are excerpts from Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba’s Revolutionary Armed Forces. The Spanish edition, Haciendo historia, is one of Pathfinder’s Books of the Month for February. The section quoted is from the interview with José Ramón Fernández conducted by Jack Barnes, Mary-Alice Waters, and Martín Koppel. Fernández was field commander at Playa Girón, where Cuba’s popular militias and Revolutionary Armed Forces defeated the 1961 U.S.-organized Bay of Pigs invasion in 72 hours of combat. In his comments Fernández points to the class difference between a bourgeois army and a revolutionary army. He also describes the successful fight waged by the militias in defeating U.S.-backed counterrevolutionary groups—the bandits—operating in the Escambray mountains in the early 1960s. Copyright ©1999 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

WATERS: It would be useful to return to a point you made earlier about the difference between a bourgeois army and a revolutionary army—the difference in the treatment of soldiers, and the relations between soldiers and officers.

FERNÁNDEZ: As a rule, a bourgeois army imposes its command, with some



Courtesy José Ramón Fernández
José Ramón Fernández, field commander of Cuba’s revolutionary forces at Playa Girón that defeated U.S.-organized Bay of Pigs invasion force in 72 hours in April 1961.

variation, through law, through established norms based exclusively on hierarchy and rank. A socialist army, our army, also uses norms and requires obedience. But discipline is achieved through conscious methods, and the commanding officers derive their authority from the consent of their subordinates; they earn that authority every day by their ability, work, and example.

In this army nobody can give orders who is not respected, who does not have the approval of one’s subordinates. Command, clearly, isn’t conferred by elections, but it’s essential to have the consent and approval of one’s subordinates. The army requires very strict discipline; there can be no concessions on that. But it must be very just, very humane, and maintain the highest moral values.

There have been tremendous abuses in other armies we know, or have known. To me, the attitudes that exist in the U.S. Marine Corps and among its instructors are often bestial; they’re often criminal, inhumane, and unworthy. They are truly contemptible in a military institution. I’m not talking about the young people who have drowned in the swamps. I’m talking about the dehumanizing and denigrating methods of treating young people. That is unacceptable. That is an example of the difference between the two types of armies.

When someone who exercises authority or enforces discipline must do so, this often rankles those who are the

objects of the command. You have to remember, however, that in our armed forces there are the units of the party; there are units of the UJC [Union of Young Communists]. These organizations strive for discipline and at the same time defend and guarantee the rights of individuals. There are places where one may speak frankly and say everything, regardless of rank. That doesn’t happen in other armies.

Battle in the Escambray

BARNES: You referred earlier to the fight against the bandits in the Escambray? Could we return to that?

During the conference that Mary-Alice and I took part in here, Compañero Balaguer¹ talked about the generation of leaders that won their spurs not in the struggle against Batista, but at Girón, and in fighting to clean the bandits out of the Escambray. But the Escambray is a chapter of the revolutionary struggle that is very little known in the United States today.

It’s important for revolutionaries in the United States to learn about this. Many of us spent time in Nicaragua,

1. Cuban Communist Party leader José Ramón Balaguer gave the keynote address at an October 21–23, 1997, international conference on Socialism on the Threshold of the 21st Century, which Barnes and Waters had just participated in.

and we closely followed the Nicaraguan revolution. We watched with concern as we saw methods being used there to defeat the U.S.-organized counterrevolutionary forces evolve in a manner that finally compromised the Sandinistas’ ability to win the political battle in the countryside. For that reason, among others, the question of the Escambray is very important for workers and youth who try to draw lessons from the Cuban revolution.

FERNÁNDEZ: I only participated in the Escambray on two occasions. Each time it was for one week, commanding some special unit that had been called up to fight there. But the battalions under my command that were training in Havana, at least those from the militias, were the principal forces in the mission to eliminate the bands in the Escambray.

The fight in the Escambray was conducted mainly by the militia units. The Escambray was an artificial situation created by U.S. agencies in late 1960 and early 1961 to promote subversion in Cuba. One of its aims was to provoke general uprisings and convert them into a force that would coincide in time and place and would cooperate with the invading brigade that landed at Playa Girón, which was initially scheduled to land at Trinidad.

Pardon me for a second. [*Fernández goes to get a map.*]

This is a tourist map of Cuba—the country is 1,200 kilometers [740 miles] from east to west, 100 kilometers [60 miles] from north to south, on average. Here is Trinidad, where the Girón landing was originally going to be. Kennedy was against it, since it’s next to a city and was going to be too much of a scandal. That’s part of history; it’s in all the books.

Instead, the landing took place here, [*pointing to the map*] at Playa Girón in the Bay of Pigs. And the Escambray [*pointing*] is here. In other words, promoting counterrevolutionary groups in the Escambray was part of the preparation for the invasion and was timed to coincide precisely with the landing. The Escambray was to serve as a base of support, creating a zone that could be dominated by the invading brigade and by enemy forces in general.

February

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8 The Militant March 2, 2009

Back Guadeloupe, Martinique strikes!

The French government has dispatched heavily armed gendarmes to back up police in its Caribbean colonies where mass strikes continue to spread.

As workers and farmers on the islands take to the streets with demands to protect themselves from the capitalist economic crisis, they deserve the support of working people everywhere. We should demand the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of all French troops and police.

The French capitalists refer to Guadeloupe and Martinique as “overseas departments,” a fancy name for colonies that are also a source of their superprofits. The islands are big tourist destinations—Club Med has resorts there—and ports of call for cruise ships from around the world.

One indication of the inequality that reigns in Guadeloupe is that less than 1 percent of the population—the descendants of white French colonialists and an integral part of the French capitalist class—owns most of the wealth and land, while the overwhelming majority of working people there are Black. A similar

situation exists in nearby Martinique.

Less than a half million people live in each of these island nations, some 445,000 in Guadeloupe and 400,000 in Martinique, yet tens of thousands have joined the strikes and protests. As the economic crisis of capitalism continues to spread, more and more workers around the world will follow their example.

The challenge working people face in Guadeloupe and Martinique is the same as that posed around the world: how to take power out of the hands of the ruling rich and put in place workers and farmers governments that can advance the organization of the working classes and reorganize the economy on the basis of meeting human needs, not profits.

In Guadeloupe and Martinique this fight will be intertwined with the struggle for independence from French imperialist rule.

Capitalism’s long hot winter has begun, and so has the resistance that will, in the decades ahead, lead to overturning the wages system once and for all.

U.S. ‘stimulus’ bill deepens protectionism

Continued from front page

cism from government officials in Canada and some European nations who had signed earlier trade agreements permitting bids from abroad on U.S.-government contracts.

China, Brazil, and Russia are among the steel-producing countries that will be immediately blocked from exporting these goods to the United States.

The “stimulus” law prohibits banks and other financial firms that receive federal bailout money from hiring immigrant workers on H-1B visas if they have recently laid off U.S. workers. “Independent” senator Bernie Sanders and Republican senator Charles Grassley promoted this anti-working-class provision.

Protectionist moves are also accelerating by governments throughout Europe. A February 16 *Business Week* article reported that the French government insists that money disbursed to bail out the country’s auto companies has to be spent in France. French president Nicolas Sarkozy has also called for moving the manufacture of French cars from the Czech Republic and Slovakia to France.

The recent reactionary strike by some 3,000 construction workers in the United Kingdom against employment of immigrant workers was fueled by a protectionist campaign promoted by Britain’s prime minister and captured in the strike’s slogan—”British jobs for British workers.”

Unemployment rising

The White House promises that the new “stimulus” package will create or save 3.5 million “American jobs” over the next two years. However, the pace of job cuts by the bosses is not expected to slow down anytime soon. According to Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody’s Economy.com, the stimulus measure may create about 2.2 million jobs but unemployment will continue to rise to about 10 percent by the end of 2010.

LETTERS

Case of Eddie Bell

Eddie Bell is scheduled to be executed in Virginia February 19 despite the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that the mentally retarded cannot be executed. Bell, who is Jamaican-born, was convicted of killing a white cop in 1999. He maintains his innocence.

The Virginia Supreme Court said he can’t be provided an expert to determine mental retardation without first proving retardation, and then ignored a report filed by his expert witness that concluded retardation.

Kim O’Brien

Willimantic, Connecticut

Madoff’s America

Bernie Madoff was arrested for embezzling over \$50 billion from the deregulated free marketplace. He made money the same way all the financial racketeers still do.

‘Militant’ Prisoners’ Fund

The Prisoners’ Fund makes it possible to send prisoners reduced rate subscriptions. To donate, send a check or money order payable to the Militant and earmarked “Prisoners’ Fund” to 306 W. 37th St., 10th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

As a billionaire, he was not jailed, but placed under house arrest in his luxurious New York apartment.

\$50 billion is far more than was spent on the Food Stamp program last year.

A prisoner
Florida

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Guadeloupe

Continued from front page

unions and associations that make up the LKP is for a 200 euro (US\$250) per month wage increase for the 45,000 lowest paid workers on the island. The French government has refused to meet this demand, insisting that this can only be negotiated directly with local capitalists. The LKP has also demanded a freeze on rents, reduction of taxes and food prices, and a 50-cent cut in the price of a liter of fuel.

Among the organizations affiliated to the LKP are the General Union of Guadeloupe Workers (UGTG), the Union of Guadeloupe Agricultural Producers, and two of the main teachers unions on the island.

In a phone interview Tony Dagnet of the UGTG said the cost of living on the island is 40 percent higher than in France. The unemployment rate is 43 percent, he added.

Jacques Bino was shot dead after returning from a union meeting and protest, said LKP leader Elie Domota, who is also head of the UGTG. Nicolas Desforges, the top appointed official on the island, claimed that Bino was shot by armed youth at a barricade in a housing project, according to the Associated Press.

In the interview Dagnet said that a person in the car with Bino called for ambulance help that did not arrive for more than two hours. He said that Bino was struck three times by bullets from heavy weapons, likely fired by police.

After having ignored the strike for the first two weeks, the government of French president Nicolas Sarkozy finally sent Yves Jégo, the government minister in charge of relations with overseas French territories, to Guadeloupe to open negotiations with the strikers.

A number of agreements were reached, including a freeze in public housing rents for the coming year, a reduction in gasoline prices, a 10 percent cut in the price of more than 100 basic commodities sold by supermarkets, and a 20 percent increase in aid to finance school meals for a quarter million students. But the agreement on raising wages by 200 euros a month was vetoed by the government, which then broke off further negotiations.

Alain Huygues-Despointes, the leading capitalist in Guadeloupe, stirred up considerable controversy after his televised remarks that he was opposing the strike in order to “save his race.” Huygues-Despointes is the head of the Guadeloupean Békée, the descendants of the white plantation slave owners who still dominate the island’s economy.

In answer to his remarks a Guadeloupean economist pointed out that the Békée represented less than 1 percent of the island’s population but owned between 80 percent and 90 percent of its production.

The French government has dispatched Christiane Taubira, a parliamentary deputy from the French colony of Guyana and a member of the Socialist Party’s parliamentary caucus, to Guadeloupe. She attacked what she called the monopolistic economic power “which has been abused by the Békée caste.” But as an alternative to raising wages, she urged strikers to accept suggestions by some members of the Sarkozy government to turn the question of high prices on the island over to a government commission.

Victorin Lurel and Jacques Gillot, local elected officials of the Socialist Party, called on the strikers to soften up the impact of the strike by allowing some stores and gasoline stations to reopen. They proposed a 100-euro-a-month bonus for three months to 40,000 workers. The bonus offer was firmly refused by strikers, who reiterated their demand for a wage increase instead.

With further negotiations blocked, the government has prepared for a more direct confrontation with the strikers, moving two squadrons with 130 heavily armed gendarmes, a branch of the French army, to Martinique on February 12. Other forces have been brought into Guadeloupe. The main supermarket on the island and 42 of the 115 gas stations were seized by the government February 14 and ordered to reopen. The police were ordered to “enforce this decision.” Jégo announced that the government would be “very rigorous in ensuring respect of the law.”

Seth Galinsky in New York contributed to this article.